

## Conservation Security Program

### *Tips to get you on the fast track for CSP acceptance!*

- #1 **Get ready.** Now that the watersheds have been announced, there will be time to talk to neighbors, talk with NRCS specialists, and read up on program requirements. Even if you aren't in these two watersheds, get ready and get familiar with the program and requirements anyway. Next year and the next watersheds will be right around the corner...
- #2 **Attend the NRCS sponsored local meetings** and workshops to learn more about the program and the requirements. Ask about dates and places.
- #3 **Get a copy of the CSP Self Assessment Workbook** at your local NRCS office or check it out online at <http://csp.sc.egov.usda.gov/> Read it, go through the questions and self assessment. Become familiar with it. You'll have a better understanding of how the self assessment process works and what you need to do. The more you understand, the better!
- #4 **Ensure that the conservation practices on your land are comprehensive.** CSP requires a broad range of stewardship initiatives and in order to qualify, you need to be certain your operation covers all aspects—nutrient management, pesticide management, waste utilization and grazing plans, soil tests and soil quality, water quality and energy conservation.
- #5 **Annual cash rent deal? If possible, try to get a 10-year lease.** Why? Because with CSP, you need to be able to confirm that you will be in control and have authority over the land for the length of the CSP contract.
- #6 **Are your gullies controlled?** Are you using reduced tillage and no-till methods? Remember, the more trips you make across your fields, the more you reduce soil quality.
- #7 **Willing and able to undertake new enhancements for your operation?** You can increase your payments dramatically. While CSP recognizes and rewards what you have already done on your land, it still requires ongoing and new conservation activity as well.
- #8 **Compile your records and written documentation** for nutrient management activities, pest control, waste utilization practices, and pesticides and pasture and rangeland management activities. Do you keep cows out of the stream? Can you document a 200-foot setback from aquatic resources if you apply manure to your fields?
- #9 **Adhere to proper soil fertility.** You have to be able to document your actions and management decisions for 5 years on some practices and 2 years on others. Records are essential with CSP!
- #10 **Be sure your conservation solutions are diverse.** Just being an outstanding no-till farmer isn't going to qualify you for CSP. Improvements or enhancements made to improve wildlife habitat or provide wildlife food or cover count in CSP.
- #11 **Don't wait** until it gets too close to the deadline to see how your operation stacks up. See if you are eligible. Take advantage of the lead time in order to take advantage of this tremendous opportunity.